

Jenks (Ed. W.)

THE

Relations of Ancient Medicine

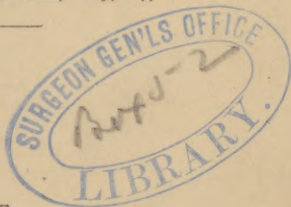
TO

Gynæcology

By EDWARD W. JENKS, M.D.,

PROFESSOR OF MEDICAL AND SURGICAL DISEASES OF WOMEN AND OBSTETRICS, DETROIT
MEDICAL COLLEGE; FELLOW OF THE AMERICAN GYNÆCOLOGICAL SOCIETY, ETC.

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A paper read before the Inter-State Medical Convention, held in Toledo, Nov. 28th,
29th, and 30th, 1876.*

In these days, when science, in all its various departments, has many original investigators, and that mighty engine for the diffusion of knowledge—the printing press—serves as the means of bringing within the reach of all who desire the latest views and more recent theories on every subject, we observe that the progress in whatever pertains to the science and art of medicine is in keeping with all other branches of learning. In medicine, the rapid multiplication of books, the demand for new editions of them, occasioned by the avidity with which new theories are, not unfrequently, adopted, and old ones dropped and forgotten, in our haste after new knowledge causes many to ignore the learning of the past.

Many excellent and skillful physicians hold in light esteem the medical scholars and authors of preceding generations, while

* This paper by vote of the Society was subsequently read before the Detroit Medical and Library Association.

they present theories and prescribe remedies, as new and original with themselves, that were, perhaps, known and in vogue hundreds of years before. Old editions of the works of those who have added lustre and renown to medicine in the past are, by many, regarded as mere literary curiosities, to be looked at, and not read, and as possessing no intrinsic value in these times of progressive knowledge.

I do not wish to be understood as entertaining contempt in any degree, for the enthusiastic admirers of the present state of medical knowledge. One who loves the "healing art" cannot but glory in the wonderful achievements and scholarly attainments of the medical men of our own generation. The fair Temple of Medicine was not reared in a day; and, while we add to and embellish and beautify its superstructure, let us not forget the fathers who laid broad and deep the foundation. An esteemed medical friend once remarked that no medical work written previous to Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood was of any practical value.

On the other hand, it is stated, upon good authority, that a recently translated papyrus in the Berlin Collection contains a treatise on medicine, transcribed about the nineteenth dynasty, but believed by learned Egyptologists to have been written in the time of the early Mephitic Kings (2600—3500, B. C.)—at least a thousand years before the birth of Moses. Now, a study of those parts of the laws of Moses wherein special allusions are made to the hygienics of women, and precautions advised concerning them, indicates very clearly that the prudent regulations enjoined, and so necessary under the conditions and climate in which the people lived, were founded on observation of the evils arising from neglect. Moses, we are told, was skilled in all the knowledge of the Egyptians; and the rules and observations mentioned were such as would have struck any acute and inquiring stranger, living in a land "where medical precepts had gradually influenced the domestic habits of the *people."

The wonderful precepts of Moses upon matters pertaining

* Wright on Uterine Disorders, London, 1867.

to hygiene, from whatever source derived, cannot but excite the admiration of physicians ; and, without doubt, the well known vitality of the Jewish people, observed in all parts of the habitable globe, is due to the religious observance of Moses' teachings.

Aside from all other conditions in connection with the antiquity of medicine, it seems impossible that it should wholly languish, when we consider that it has been sanctified for all time, as evinced by the inspired writings of Moses and the healing of the sick by Christ and His apostles.

It is but little questioned that the early Greek physicians obtained much of their knowledge of medicine from the Egyptians, of whom Homer speaks as "skilled above all men, and directly descended from Apollo."

The cultured physician of our own day is familiar with ante-Harveian medicine, and would unwillingly part with the knowledge obtained from the early authors.

The physician with the most advanced views in any department of medicine or surgery, cannot fail to find something valuable and suggestive in the works of Hippocrates, Celsus, Aretæus, Aetius, Paulus, and, among later but still ancient authors, as Pare, Morgagni, Mauriceau, Sydenham and others.

We find much that seems to us absurd and amusing in the light of modern medicine ; remedies were prescribed because they produced certain effects, as we continue to prescribe them now, notwithstanding our advanced knowledge concerning the physiological action of drugs. How many, who have alternately burned and frozen with fever and ague, have blessed the discoverer of the merits of Jesuit bark, and how many have prescribed it or its active principle, with confident assurance of its affording relief, long before we had occasion to think of what Quinia could or would do to the white blood corpuscles ?

We have just reason for expecting that the present generation of patient and scientific workers will greatly add to the store of medical knowledge by their work in the fields of experimental physiology and the physiological action of remedies.

We can not but hail with greatest pleasure any new truth

evolved by diligent research ; or any new plan of treatment, or any new surgical procedure by which human suffering is assuaged or life prolonged. The history of medicine, from the earliest antiquity, teems with the recorded labors of earnest educated physicians, working for the same ends and purposes as the most brilliant minds and foremost workers in our ranks to-day.

It is impossible for us to tell how much medical knowledge in the past has been gained and then lost amid the various changes of the world's history. It is stated that the great Alexandrian library, in which were many medical treatises, contained 700,000 volumes when it was destroyed A. D. 642 ; here was substantial loss but in the ages of darkness and superstition which succeeded this period, knowledge was also lost.

After the discovery of printing, in the 15th century, knowledge became more generally diffused.

In perusing many ancient medical works that have been transmitted to us, we find much of no possible value, but we may ask if at present there is not much printed and promulgated that may be classed in the same category, and considerable that, should it survive beyond the present generation, will excite the ridicule and commiseration of future readers. There are in addition some Paracelsian authors and many practitioners in the 19th century whose theories will prove as untenable and absurd as those of the prince of charlatans.

I have already alluded to medicine as a fair temple whose foundations were laid by the fathers ; and to continue the figure, we know that in the building of a vast structure, years are sometimes required, and the stones but cumber the ground till the architect puts them in place. A wing is built in one direction, a battlement in another ; in one part from bad construction or poor material, decay is manifest before completion ; some has to be torn down on account of bad workmanship ; the building for a time is neglected, the work of years is lost and the stones again cumber the ground, but the foundation remains imperishable. After a time the architect begins to direct how the disjointed parts are to be put in place and the laborers toil

under proper direction, causes the edifice to grow into beautiful and admirable proportions. So the temple at which we figuratively worship has been principally in the hands of master workmen. Bunglers have sometimes marred its beauty and perhaps for a time have built unwisely; a wall has had to be pulled down here and another repaired there; delays have occurred and sometimes it has been partially destroyed, but the foundation has remained firm, and has continued to grow more and more perfect in structure. But the time of its completion we know not. We only know that the work of its construction will continue until the time the human race has arrived at that happy period, when there are no more lives to be saved, and there is no more suffering to be relieved. I have heretofore alluded to the science of medicine as a whole desiring to keep prominent this one thought that medical knowledge of the past can not be entirely ignored, and that the present state of medical science has been attained rather by the process of accretion than by any sudden development.

I desire in the remaining portion of this paper to direct your attention to some of the theories and curiosities of ancient Gynæcology.

Gynæcology during the past fifty years, probably more than any department of medicine, has been enriched by investigations, discoveries and improvements. In fact it is quite generally considered that the present state of knowledge of all pertaining to the diseases of women has been wholly developed in the 19th century. It is true that an impulse was given in the early part of this century to the study of diseases of women, by Recamier and his contemporaries which has brought out brilliant results, the like of which cannot be found anywhere in the history of medicine. It is a source of just pride to us that in Gynæcology, America stands pre-eminent, and has contributed so much to elevate it as a science and an art.

In ancient gynæcology we find many strange and curious theories—absurdities mixed with common sense and improbabilities with rational treatment and many suggestive and valuable

thoughts. I shall endeavor to place before you a few of these, with which many of my hearers are undoubtedly familiar, without extensive commentation. I do not aim to place them in strict chronological order, but only to present fragments in the history of gynæcology. The history of the ancient Egyptians, long prior to the time of Hippocrates, indicates that there existed among them specialists in the various departments of medicine and surgery, and that there was an advanced knowledge of the diseases of women. Kendrick, on "Ancient Egypt," says: "The fame of its physicians was spread throughout the ancient world. Cambyzes sent for an oculist from Egypt, and Darius kept Egyptian physicians around him." "Egypt," says Herodotus, "was full of physicians." They were required to practice according to certain precepts handed down from ancient times in the sacred books. Six of these are enumerated by Alexandrinus. One on the structure of the body, another on its diseases; a third on medical and surgical instruments; a fourth on drugs; a fifth on the eyes, and a sixth on female diseases. This division and arrangement comprehended physiology, pathology, pharmaceutics and surgery, and indicates an advanced state of the science. The different branches of practice were minutely divided, and each practitioner confined himself to one.

Sir Gardner Wilkinson, in his interesting work upon the manners and customs of the ancient Egyptians, like Kendrick, quotes from Herodotus concerning the state of medical science, and writes: "Nothing can more clearly prove their advancement in the study of human diseases than the fact that they assigned to each his own peculiar branch, under the different heads of oculists, dentists, those who cured diseases in the head, those who confined themselves to internal complaints, and those who attended to secret or internal maladies." He also alludes to their dissections, and the now lost art of Egyptian embalmment. "In later ages," says Kendrick, "Egyptian medicine was much contaminated by astrology."

We have, however, no literature fairly attainable upon diseases of women earlier than the works of Hippocrates, or

those attributed to him, as it is thought by many commentators that some of the books found in the works of Hippocrates were not written by him. It is evident, however, that they were written in his epoch. Hippocrates lived four and a half centuries before Christ.

The observations contained in his work upon menstruation are certainly ingenious.

"For the cure of sterility, fumigation of the uterus is recommended, and a minute description is given of the mode of performing this process by means of a tube introduced into the os uteri, and connected with a vessel which emits aromatic fumes."

The mechanical treatment of sterility is not wholly a modern invention, as we find this author recommends that, in cases occasioned by shutting up of the os uteri, expansion be effected by means of a wooden or leaden pipe. Directions are also given for applying to the mouth of the womb, after being opened, a cleansing application of cantharides and myrrh.

Abortion is spoken of by this author as attended with more dangers than delivery at full term.

Adams,⁽¹⁾ the learned commentator upon the works of Hippocrates, says of those portions attributed to him on diseases of women, that "there are treatises in the collection more deserving of an attentive perusal. They furnish the most indubitable proofs that the obstetrical art had been cultivated with most extraordinary ability at an early period." Beyond all doubt, the complaints of women and the accidents attending parturition must at that time have come under the jurisdiction of the male practitioners. The most important chapter relating to diseases of women, of the works of Celsus who lived in the first century after Christ is in a great part lost. Celsus was a Roman and did not like the Greeks, nor had he studied at Alexandria, which was for centuries the centre of medical learning, as Athens was of philosophy and Corinth of the arts.

Wright⁽²⁾ in his chapter upon the "Historical disorders of

(1) Adams' Com. on Works of Hippocrates, Syd. Soc.—London, 1849.

(2) *Op. Cit.* page 7.

Uterine Pathology," says in reference to Celsus, that even in his time diseases of the genital organs were so far a speciality of the Greek school that he could make it a subject of covert sarcasm. In treating of them he says "their nomenclature among the Greeks is not only tolerated, but now fully sanctioned by practice for they are freely employed in almost every volume, work, or treatise of the physician; but with us Romans these terms are filthy and never employed by any one who has a proper regard for modesty in language, therefore it is evident that there is no small difficulty in maintaining at the same time a delicacy of expression whilst delivering the precepts of the art." "Whether it was jealousy" says Wright "or a continuance of the same bitter feeling towards the Grecian schools of medicine, previously exemplified by Cato and Pliny, it is evident that some other than the alleged motive prompted Celsus to write this sentence; for being a shrewd practitioner he must have known that the morality of the Romans as described in the sixth satire of Juvenal, scarcely required such tender solicitude." Galen and Aretæus probably lived at the same time, for the reason that neither one makes mention of the other. We have reason to believe that they flourished from the middle to the latter part of the second century of the Christian era. In Galen occurs the earliest allusion to the vaginal speculum, Aretæus' description of ulcerations of the uterus would indicate that he was equally familiar with the speculum vaginæ. "Both of these authors studied at Alexandria and practised at Rome."

In the latter author we find a chapter on "Hysterical Suffocation" which begins as follows: "In the middle of the flanks of women lies the womb, a female viscus closely resembling an animal; for it is moved of itself hither and thither in the flanks, also upwards in a direct line to below the cartilage of the thorax, and also obliquely to the right and the left to the liver and the spleen; and it is likewise subject to prolapsus downwards, and, in a word, is altogether erratic. It delights, also, in fragrant smells, and advances toward them, and it has an aversion to fetid smells, and flees from them; and on the whole, the womb is like an animal within an animal." In an-

other chapter upon "Affections of the Womb," is the following : "The uterus in woman is beneficial for purgation and parturition, but it is the common source of innumerable and bad diseases, for not only is it subject to ulcers, inflammation, and the fluor, but if the whole organ be suddenly carried upwards it quickly causes death." Notwithstanding the astounding opinions of Aretaeus concerning the uterus, his description of its diseases is indeed excellent, although some of the chapters on treatment are lost.

Aetius, who studied and lived in Alexandria, spent his lifetime condensing and compiling all that was known of medical literature up to the period in which he lived. In the famous library of his city he was unquestionably a faithful and diligent student. It was here that his great work, which is still extant, was prepared about 150 years prior to the destruction of the library by the Saracens. Wright says, "it is without doubt the most valuable existing work on ancient medicine, though but little known." In his 16th book Aetius treats principally of the disorders of women, devoting to the subject one hundred and twelve chapters, varying from a few lines to several pages. Thirty-seven of these chapters treat of pregnancy, parturition, and suckling ; there are six chapters on various kinds of ulcerations of the womb ; three on abscess, two on displacements, two on obstructed and imperforate anus, seven on growths occurring in the vagina or uterus, and eighteen chapters on menstruation and its disorders. He has special chapters for hysteria, fibrous tumors, pelvic abscess, hæmatoma, displacements, &c., and devotes one very long chapter to inflammation of different parts of the uterus and its treatment.

"So far as concerns the speculum (or dioptra) as a means of diagnosis or treatment it is specially worthy of notice that he mentions it repeatedly. Of the speculum vaginæ we can trace quite a connected history from Aetius down to the present day, although at different times a knowledge of its uses seems to have been lost or forgotten, until its value was again urged upon the profession in the early part of the present century. That specula and other surgical instruments supposed to be of recent in-

vention were in use long anterior to the days of Aetius, we have incontestable proof. In the exhumations of Pompeii, during the second decade of the present century, tri-valve and bi-valve specula, and other gynæcological instruments of excellent workmanship were found, and are still preserved. "In the house of an obstetrix which was excavated was found an instrument of art closely resembling the modern obstetric forceps."* These instruments were probably in common use when the city was buried in the year 79 of the Christian era, or four hundred years before the time of Aetius. Of the speculum and its varieties I shall speak again in connection with various ancient authors. Suppositories, or medicated pessaries, claimed to be of modern invention, were used by Aetius, and in his work are the formulæ for over a hundred varieties. He also mentions sponge tents and describes the mode of introducing them; injections, hip baths, plain and medicated; the value of rectal examinations in retroversion of the uterus, and how it may be restored to its normal position per rectum; to granulations about the os uteri he recommends the application of verdigris. A century after Aetius, flourished Paulus, of Aegineta, whose works have been translated into English by Adams, and published by the Old Sydenham Society. With them many of you are undoubtedly familiar. Paulus does not always conscientiously give credit to authors who preceded him, for there are many things in almost the exact language of Aetius and others; for instance the following in writing of abscess of the womb: "In operating, the woman should be placed in supine posture, her legs drawn up to the belly and her thighs separated from one another, the operator sitting on her right side is to make an examination with a speculum (dioptra) proportioned to her age. The person using the speculum would measure with a probe the depth of the woman's vagina, lest the stalk (fistula) of the speculum being too long it should happen that the uterus should be pressed upon."

The further description would indicate that the disease under consideration is pelvic abscess, for he says "if the abscess

*Adams on Paulus, page 682.

be within the mouth of the uterus, we must decline operating." It is somewhat difficult to comprehend the mechanism of Paulus' speculum, but it is thought that the speculum of Albucaris, of the 11th century, was constructed in accordance with the description of Paulus. The figured instruments in Scultetus, however, are described in the language of Paulus at a still later period.

Of pessaries, Paulus says, that "they are of three kinds, and are applied to the womb; some are emollient, some astringent, and some are anastamative (i. e., they open the mouths of vessels). We use the emollient in inflammation of the womb, and ulcerations and coldness of it, in ascension, eversion and inflation thereof. They are prepared from Tuscan wax, the oil of privet and of lilies, the fat of geese and of fowls, unsalted butter, burnt rosin, stag's marrow, and the like. The anastamative, or those used to open the mouths of vessels, are used when we wish to recall the menstrual purgation that has been stopped, or to correct the state of the womb when it is shut up or contracted. These are prepared from honey, mugwort dittany, the juice of cabbage liquorice, the juice of horehound, new scammony, and the like. The astringents are used in cases the reverse of those for which the anastamative are used, for they restrain the female discharge, contract the womb when it is open, and impel it upwards when it is prolapsed. The pessaries of the ancients were rather for the purpose of medicating than to serve as a support, as at the present time. They were sometimes ointments or liniment applied to the parts upon wool, and most commonly were for the purpose of correcting the menstrual discharge. They were frequently resorted to for the wicked purpose of procuring an abortion. Hippocrates required his pupils to give an oath that they would not give pessaries to women for that purpose.

Among ancient authors sterility was written upon at length.* Hippocrates assigns the following reasons for a woman not conceiving: First, because the os uteri is turned obliquely from the passage to it; second, because the inside of the uterus is too

*Adams' commentaries, Vol. 1, London, 1844, in Paulus, pages 643 and 644.

smooth, and will not retain the semen ; third, owing to suppression of the menses obstruction takes place about the os uteri ; fourth, when menstruation does not take place the veins of the uterus become so gorged with blood that they do not retain the semen, or, on the contrary, the same effect may result from profuse menstruation, whereby the retentive faculty of the vessels is weakened, or a return of the menstrual fluid in too great quantity may wash away the semen ; fifth, prolapsus uteri, by rendering the mouth of the womb hard and callous, prevents impregnation. The treatment is given at great length. Aetius, Paulus, and Serapion, an Arabian of the 11th century, regulated their treatment entirely upon the principle of correcting the intemperaments which Serapion considers the most common causes of sterility. "A humid intemperament," he says, "occasions sterility in the same manner that wet ground proves injurious to seed which is sown upon it, and a hot intemperament dries up the semen as the earth scorches the seed during the heat of the dog days."

"Avicenna, Rhases, Avenzoar, likewise direct their attention to the correction of the intemperaments, but also recommend attention to any other local complaint about the genital organs." Paulus refers to fissures occurring about the mouth of the uterus as the result of difficult labor, and how they are recognized, and the mode of treatment ; also to hæmorrhoids and condylomata about the neck of the womb which can be seen by means of the speculum, seized with forceps and cut out ; or sometimes they may be cured by the application of dried pomegranate rind with galls or something similar. These growths alluded to are without doubt polypi of the uterus.

There is in Paulus an interesting chapter on difficult labor in which correction of mal-position is described, and embryotomy advised if the child is dead or from any other cause it does not advance ; the free use of oils and cerates is also recommended. Aetius treats of the subject more fully. Hippocrates recommends that where there is inertia, the woman be shaken and also given irritating snuffs, and the nostrils held so that the effort at sneezing may expel the child. When the

placentæ are retained, Hippocrates orders that they be extracted slowly and for this purpose directs that the woman be placed upon a stool and the child be allowed to hang down without the umbilical cord having been cut so that the weight of the child may produce separation; and lest its weight should occasion too strong pulling, he advises it to be placed on wool or bladders filled with water which being perforated with small apertures, the child shall sink down gradually and draw away the placenta.

Celsus gives better advice. He directs us to stretch the cord gently with the left hand and introduce the right, separate the placenta from the uterus and remove all retained coagula. Adams the translator and commentator of Paulus writes as follows: "Serapion treats this subject in nearly the same terms as our author. Like the Greeks he approves of the use of emollient oils and baths, to produce relaxation. The same practice is advised by Rhases. When the membranes are tough he advises us to tear them with the fingers, or open them with a knife. Avicenna treats of difficult parturition with his usual accuracy which exhausts every subject he handles. He states that the expulsion of the child is performed by the abdominal muscles. This was the opinion of Galen. He approves greatly of the bath, both before labor has come on and during its progress. When delivery is difficult owing to the size of the child he directs us to apply a fillet around the child's head and endeavor to extract it. When this does not succeed the forceps are to be applied, and the child is extracted by them. If this can not be accomplished the child is extracted by incision, as in the case of a dead fœtus.

This passage puts it beyond a doubt that the Arabians were acquainted with the method of delivering the child alive with the forceps. It would seem that the early Greeks and Romans, at least so far as their writings are concerned, were unacquainted with their use, although the instruments were found as before stated in the ruins of Pompeii. The obstetric forceps may have been, in those early days, kept secret as they were so recently for many years by the Chambelain family. Of the vaginal specu-

lum for diagnosis and treatment of women's diseases, we have a much more perfect history. It was known before Aetius, and described by him showing the testimony of acknowledged authorities in its favor. Still their teachings were disregarded for upwards of a thousand years, while we have every reason to believe there were women suffering from diseases peculiar to their sex, and as greatly requiring help in those days as much as now. This loss of acquired knowledge in the diseases of women of which the speculum formed a part, calls forth from Wright to whom I have before alluded the following interesting resume. After speaking of the disregard of the teachings of Aetius and those whom he quotes for more than a thousand years, he says: "It forms a somewhat curious and significant episode in professional history. After the dispersion of the Alexandrian school, the professors, though scattered, were still received with honor by their Moslem captors. What they could teach was eagerly gathered except when their instruction clashed with any tenet of the Mohammedan creed. The Arabian schools which then arose comprised, equally industrious, and equally accurate observers. But the study of the diseases of women was not cultivated among them, for there was an insuperable bar to the attainment of practical experience on the subject. It was against the Mohommedan creed, that women, even in their suffering, should undergo personal examination, except by one of their own sex. Their degraded social position prevented their attaining any such position as that to which the women of Greece had vindicated their claims. Even an Hypatia or Agnodice, could not have withstood the blighting influences of Moslem sensuality." In the Arabian writings there is only a very general mention made of the diseases of women, while the local treatment was left in the hands of the midwives.

It is true that Albucasis, one of the latest writers of the school refers at greater length to those diseases, but he appears by his writings to have been a Jew. It is he who first mentions herpes of the uterus and the use of an air pessary for the vagina. Then, as to this day in the East, the midwives undertook the

work. One of them, Trotula, in the 13th century, published a treatise on uterine disorders in which she expressly mentions that many Saracenic women practiced at Salerno. It would seem that the Arabian writers directed how the work was to be done by the midwives, rather than by male physicians.

Jacobus Rueffus in 1587 published his work "De Conceptu et Generatione Hominis," etc; in which is a drawing of a speculum which he calls the speculum matricis, and which he describes as useful in difficult parturition to dilate the uterus and aid in the delivery of the child; also an apertorium for a similar purpose and the first engraving of which I have any knowledge of a *smooth* bladed obstetric forceps. Here it may be well to notice that although the Arabians as mentioned by Avicenna, were, as I before stated, familiar with obstetric forceps for the delivery of children alive, yet Albucasis who writes at great length upon diseases of women, and has drawings of the instruments used and recommended by him, shows no indication that he was familiar with the forceps alluded to by his predecessors, for all of his have teeth and are manifestly either for destroying the child or delivering it without regard to life. Ambrose Pare', in the 16th century, who did so much for surgery, and obstetrics made use of the speculum as did Guillemeau his pupil and successor at the French court. We find the speculum figured in Scultetus (or John Schultz,) 1666, patterned after the description of Paulus Ægineta, as the language of Scultetus accompanying the engravings is the exact language of Paulus. In Scultetus are represented many other uterine instruments, among which is a very good delineation of the modern hysterotome called by the author *scalpellus deceptorius*.

About the time of the publication of some of the works latterly mentioned, the world began to emerge from the darkness under which it had so long been clouded by reason of ignorance, superstition, sensuality and general misrule. There was a revival of learning to which the invention of printing in the 15th century had given an immense impetus. In connection with the revival of general learning, medicine bore its share. Surgeons began to rank higher than barbers, while the practice

of obstetrics and diseases of women was intrusted more to skilled and educated men than to ignorant and gossipy midwives. European literature began to be more abundant, new works upon medicine were written while many writings by ancient physicians were printed with commentaries. Among the many medical works printed were numerous treatises on diseases of women. Wolphius in 1586 edited a work composed of all important former treatises upon diseases of women, in three volumes

There seemed to be an increasing demand for this kind of medical literature, and in 1597 Spachius brought out a similar work to that of Wolphius, with additional matter in a folio (which I here show you).

We find in much of this literature the *speculum* and local treatment made mention of, and indications that the diseases of women were better understood than at a later period; for there seems, after this time, to have been a long time when the labors of former years by distinguished men were either lost or neglected in this department of medicine, until Recamier and his contemporaries gave a fresh impulse to the study of gynæcology. We find, however, in the writings of the early European physicians, a certain amount of confusion from want of pathological knowledge; for how could it be otherwise, when physiology was so little understood?

Astrology and alchemy were mixed up with medicine; the first principles of physiology were ignored when men were searching after the "philosopher's stone" and the "elixir of life." In surgical gynæcology, we find but little in ancient medicine foreshadowing the brilliant exploits of the nineteenth century. Clitorodectomy was practiced by Paulus and Albucasis, while Avicenna recommends us to remove the enlarged nymphæ or clitoris, either with medicine or knife.

Rhases, treating of diseases of the uterus, says: "If there be a red piece of flesh in the mouth of the womb, if situated in the anterior part, and if it be round or long, and not attended with pain, some surgeons cut it off, but I prefer tying it." This description seems to apply to polypus of the womb.

Pare treated many of these diseases of the womb by fumigation. There is figured in his works a lamp and tube for this purpose.

The actual cautery was one of the most important of the surgical instruments. Not until Pare used the ligature upon severed arteries was there any better mode than the cautery of arresting hemorrhage. The breast used to be amputated by transfixing it with two ligatures at right angles, and then cutting off the entire mass beneath them, and afterwards searing with a hot iron. Pare was the first to mention an operation for lacerated perineum, but gives no description of his mode of doing it.

Guillemeau is supposed to be the first to record the various steps of this operation, and reports a successful case, which I will not translate at length, but simply give a synopsis, as related by him: The recto-vaginal septum was torn through. He waited until six weeks after delivery, when, with a sharp curved bistoury, he cut one side through the cicatrix and skin and then the other side. He then transfixed the two parts through the recto-vaginal septum with a long needle, and wound the ends with silk in a figure of eight, as in his operations for hare-lip, and then put in superficial sutures. He states that the case was cured in five days. This was really an ingenious operation, and attended with excellent success.

In the works of Mauriceau are the indications of great experience, without much system or order; but in the truly celebrated work of Morgagni on "The Seats and Causes of Disease Investigated by Anatomy," is very much of interest to the student of gynæcology. I cannot forbear mentioning one author of comparatively recent date, who flourished a few years before Recamier, whose works seem to have passed into obloquy, but most undeservedly so. I refer to Vigarous, of Montpellier, France, whose "*Maladies des Femmes*," in two vols., Paris, 1801, is an analytical and classical work far in advance of his time. This author mentions electricity as one of the modes of treating sterility, a remedy of questionable virtue, yet claimed by some to be a discovery of our own day. The peculiarities of his treat-

ment, and some of the ludicrous things he relates, I will not trouble you with.

Vigorous was familiar with the speculum; for he says, writing of certain uterine disorders: "When we open the vulva of a woman with the *speculum* (italicized), we easily perceive with the eye around the orifice of the matrix, etc."*

If it were not for wearying your patience, I should much like to quote some of the interesting and instructive things mentioned by the last named authors, as well as many others to whom I have not alluded.

In looking over the literature of the past upon diseases of women, we perceive the fault of the earliest writers, who were familiar with the treatment of uterine diseases, to be that they neglected constitutional treatment. Later, local treatment was wholly neglected, and even forgotten. In the 19th century, even, we have had distinguished names arrayed as partisans of one mode, to the exclusion of the other; but, happily, knowledge has increased, and the successful gynæcologist of to day is required to be an accomplished physician, as well as a skillful surgeon. To be all this implies a broad and comprehensive knowledge of the pathogenesis and phenomena of disease, and a dexterity of hand which enables him to aid in repairing its ravages.

I have, in this fragmentary and imperfectly prepared paper, aimed to call your attention to the amount of knowledge in the past concerning diseases of women, rather than to the lack of it. The many crudities and absurdities intermingled with learning and wisdom I have purposely excluded. History repeats itself in medicine, as elsewhere; for not unfrequently we may perceive that many new discoveries and inventions have previously been in part, if not wholly, known and then lost many years before. And what is true of gynæcology in ancient times is no less true of medicine as a whole. It is almost impossible, in our investigations of the state of medical science at different times in the past, to be so interested in one depart-

*Dionis, in his "Traite des Accouchements," Paris, 1718, speaks of the speculum matricis, or mirror of the uterus, in similar language, thus showing that this instrument was better known among the French than English physicians of that period.

ment of medicine as not to feel an equal interest in all other departments, and those whose labors have rendered their names famous.

Dr. Adams, in his preface to Paulus Ægineta, writes: "It seems to me that, at certain periods of ancient times, the standard of professional excellence was such as would not easily be attained at the present day, with all our vaunted improvements in knowledge, and that many of those early masters of our art were distinguished for varied stores of erudition, an ardent love of truth and an aptitude to detect the fallacies of error such as few of us, even now, can lay claim to." Hippocrates held that, to become an eminent physician, it was necessary not only to be well acquainted with the structure of the human frame, but, also, skilled in logic, astronomy and other sciences. Galen was, without doubt, the very "beau ideal" of an accomplished physician, skilled in *all* the sciences of the day. Celsus was not only well acquainted with medical literature, but was "minutely skilled in every elegant and useful science which was known and cultivated at that remarkable period."

Rhases, the Arabian, requires of him who aspires to eminence in the medical profession, that "instead of wasting his earlier years in frequenting musical and dancing parties, he would have spent them in conning over the valuable records of ancient wisdom." "But the sciolist" says he, "who gives himself out, as a proficient in the art while he has scarcely a smattering of learning, will never be deserving of much confidence, or even attain any great eminence in his profession. For it can never be that any individual, to whatever age he may reach, should be able to comprehend in his mind a subject so vast and diffuse—except by treading upon the footsteps of the ancients. Since the science far exceeds the narrow limits of the life of man, as is the case with most of the liberal arts as well as with medicine, let us suppose that in the course of a thousand years, a thousand authors had made improvements in the profession, and then a person who has diligently studied these works may improve his mind as much in knowledge as if he had devoted a thousand years to the study of medicine. But when an ac-

quaintance with former authors is despised, what need be expected from the efforts of a single person? For however much he may surpass others in abilities, how is it to be supposed that his private stock of knowledge should be at all worthy to compare with the accumulated treasures of antiquity?"

This recorded opinion of one of our distinguished predecessors, although written in the 11th century, is in language not wholly inapplicable to the 19th. But I must desist as I am aware there is a limit to the patience of even a learned body of physicians like this, if there is none to the exercise of my pen. My paper has already occupied more of your time than I at first designed, and in conclusion I will only add: the more I have searched into the history of medicine, and read the records of past centuries, the more has my veneration and admiration increased for those who have heretofore labored to give renown, and lasting glory to the vocation which we represent. If in the minds of some present, who have given but little thought to the work accomplished by the fathers of medicine, I succeed in exciting similar feelings to my own, then my labor of love will not have been in vain.*

*NOTE.—After the reading of the paper was concluded, the author exhibited some of the ancient works from his own collection, which had been alluded to, and some drawings of Gynæcological instruments, (the specula in bronze) found in Herculaneum and Pompeii. Among these books were the following: *Spachius*, Gynæciorum Argentinæ, 1597, (this work comprises the writings upon diseases of women of Hippocrates, Felix Plater, Moschion, Cleopatra, Trotula, Jac. Sylvius, Rueffus, Mercurialis, Albucasis, Pare, Akakia, Mercatus, and others). *Ætius*, Basle 1567. *Rueffus*, De Conceptu et Generatione, Frankfurt on the Main, 1597. *Sculletus*, Armamentarium Chiurgicum, Frankfurt, 1666. *Astruc*, Traite Mal. des fem., Paris, 1785. *Garengot*, Traite de Instruments de Chiurgie le plus utile, Paris, 1723. *Dionis*, Traite des Accouch, Paris, 1718, and several volumes pertaining to diseases of women in the early part of the last century.

Les œuvres de Guillaume Paris 1612

